

**Opening Statement
Chairman Connie Mack
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee
Markup of H.R. 3401 and H.R. 2542
December 15, 2011**

H.R. 3401, the Enhanced Border Security Act, to apply counterinsurgency tactics under a coordinated and targeted strategy to combat the terrorist insurgency in Mexico waged by transnational criminal organizations, and for other purposes

The Enhanced Border Security Act draws our attention to a serious problem that requires immediate action. I have held two hearings in this subcommittee on the topic of Mexico, and have yet to see an increase in U.S. agency coordination or a substantial shift in approach.

I drafted this legislation to ensure that action is taken to secure our border, stop transnational criminal activity in the United States, and secure the role of the state in Mexico.

A terrorist insurgency is being waged along our southern border, with operations across Mexico and Central America as well as in over 1,000 U.S. cities. Many of the 40,000 people killed since 2006 have died brutal, public deaths.

The term “terrorist insurgency” may be strong, but it is based on unchallenged facts. President Calderon identified recent activity perpetrated by drug traffickers, the Zetas as “an act of terrorism.” Last week he outlined insurgent tactics taking place in Mexico, stating that (and I quote) “crime now also constitutes an open threat to democracy. The glaring interference of criminals in the electoral process is a new and worrying development.”(End quote)

The U.S. State Department has also publically verified that terrorist and insurgent tactics are being employed in Mexico.

Drug traffickers and criminal organizations have combined efforts to work across borders, unravel government structures, and make large profits from diverse illegal activity: The near term result- schools, media, and candidates all controlled by criminal organizations... In other words, total anarchy.

Let me reiterate: These transnational criminal organizations are engaged in the protracted use of irregular warfare and extreme violence to influence public opinion and to undermine government control in order to increase their own control.

This is a terrorist insurgency.

Meanwhile, the State Department is leading the charge of U.S./Mexico security policy through the Merida Initiative. And they are failing. Merida has not and will not be able to address the pending terror we face.

Mexican transnational criminal organizations have evolved to reflect traditional insurgents in the way that they:

1. Rely on external support and cross-border sanctuaries
2. Require access to money to feed their ability to operate and
3. Control the hearts and minds in their territory

Therefore, we need a strategy that uses appropriate counterinsurgency tactics to:

1. secure the border through personnel, technology and infrastructure,
2. stop criminal access to U.S. financial institutions, and
3. work with Mexico, through integrated counterinsurgency tactics, to undermine the control of these criminal organizations.

This is exactly what H.R. 3401 is calling for.

Recent reports show success in integrating military counter insurgency tactics, with limited resources, to bolster local law enforcement and curb drug related criminal activity within a dangerous U.S. city.

H.R. 3401, the Enhanced Border Security Act, is forcing the State Department to incorporate lessons learned, and the expertise of all appropriate U.S. agencies, to construct a strategy based on relevant counterinsurgency tactics to counter these illegal groups in Mexico, at the U.S. border, and within the United States.

I urge all of my colleagues to work with me in taking the first step toward developing a strategy that can succeed through the passage of the Enhanced Border Security Act